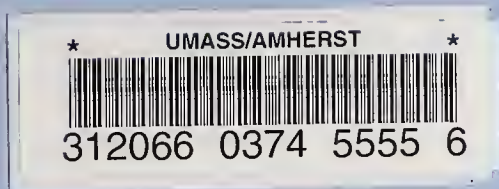


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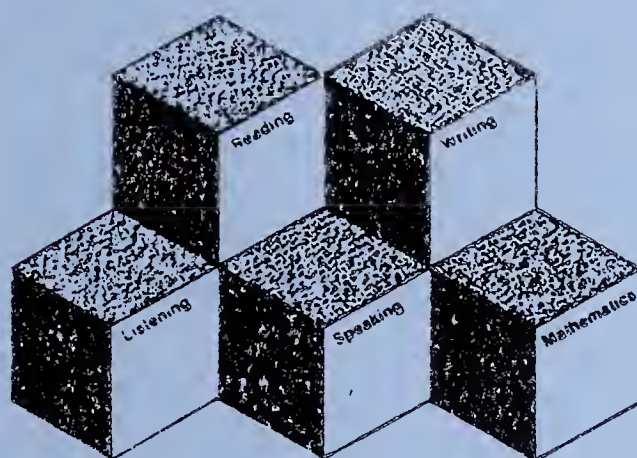
**BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT POLICY
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE #1
(Second Revised Edition)**

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

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**ASSESSING
BASIC SKILLS
ACHIEVEMENT**



Massachusetts Department of Education
April 1983

832/21

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document is an update of Implementation Guide #1 (Revised Edition): Assessing Basic Skills Achievement (May, 1980). Although it includes some of the same material presented in the earlier Guide, it focuses primarily on assessment issues and options which have arisen as a result of district's experience in implementing their Basic Skills Improvement plans.

The intent of the Policy is to focus on curriculum and instructional improvement, not just on testing. As a result, earlier editions focused more on issues in the development of such plans. This revision includes information on current reporting requirements, new test approval criteria, issues and procedures for amending plans, and suggestions for using and analyzing basic skills assessment results.

School districts have different curricula, different organizational structures, different areas of strength, and different needs. The Policy recognizes this diversity and provides a great deal of flexibility to local districts in developing, implementing and assessing programs designed to improve achievement in basic skills. This Guide, along with other materials developed by the Department, is intended to assist school districts in dealing with assessment issues, concerns, and decisions. So that the reader may gain an overall perspective on basic skills assessment, steps and procedures are presented in a simplified manner. Therefore, specific references to the Basic Skills Improvement Policy and Regulations have been omitted. The reader should refer to this document, as well as to the many other documents and materials referred to, for a complete understanding of assessment requirements and resources. For more information or additional copies of the references, contact the Basic Skills Coordinators at the Massachusetts Department of Education's Regional Centers.

II. BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

A. Development of Basic Skills Plans

All public school districts have been required to develop Basic Skills Improvement Plans for reading, writing, and mathematics by August 1, 1980, and plans for listening by August 1, 1981.* These plans have been developed for three grade levels - early elementary (K-3), later elementary (4-6), and secondary (7-12).

At the elementary level, districts are not required to submit their Basic Skills Improvement Plans to the Department for approval. However, complete plans must be developed and made available to the public, and the district must submit an Assurance to the Department that plans have been developed. The identification of objectives at the elementary level is totally a local decision developed in consultation with interested public parties. Although districts must establish objectives in each skill area (reading, writing, mathematics, listening) for each of the early elementary and later elementary levels, no state approval of these objectives is required, nor do the objectives have to include any common core of "State Objectives".

At the secondary level, Plans must be submitted for review by the Regional Education Council and the Department, with final approval by the Commissioner of Education. Secondary level objectives (also developed with participation of parents, teachers, administrators, employers and the general public) must be established for each skill area. These objectives must include those listed in the Basic Skills Improvement Regulations; however, districts may wish to add others. The addition of objectives is a district decision.

*The State Board of Education voted to delay implementation of the speaking component until no later than the 1984-85 school year. By June, 1983, the Board will reexamine its earlier delay and notify districts if Basic Skills Improvement Plans for speaking have to be submitted by August 1, 1984. If plans are to be submitted by this date, implementation of speaking would begin during the 1984-85 school year.

The Board delayed the required implementation of speaking because of limited assessment options and the need for further work on developing a reliable state secondary level instrument. However, lack of assessment options does not preclude districts from beginning work in the area of speaking. The State Board of Education strongly encourages districts to review existing curriculum for speaking, to establish speaking objectives for the elementary and secondary levels, and to begin focusing instruction toward these objectives.

The assessment components of these plans are the same at all grade levels, although the role of the Department of Education in the development of these plans differs between the elementary and secondary levels. These differences are summarized in the following chart:

DISTRICT AND STATE RESPONSIBILITY

	ELEMENTARY LEVEL	SECONDARY LEVEL
ESTABLISHMENT OF MINIMUM STANDARDS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine objectives - Determine level of achievement ("cut-off point") 	District District	District (must include State objectives) District.
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selection of initial grade level for assessment - Reassessment - Selection of evaluation instruments 	District (at least once during grades K-3 and 4-6) District District	District (first assessment must be by early in grade 9) At least once annually until student achieves minimum standards District (State must approve)

B. Implementation of Basic Skills Plans

School districts have been implementing their reading, writing, and mathematics plans since the 1980-81 school year and their plans in listening since the 1982-83 school year. For all skills and grade levels, districts are required to conduct the following assessment related activities as part of this implementation process:

1. Assess student achievement of minimum standards at least once during the school year at the grade level designated in their plans by administering the instrument(s) listed in their plans. (a) At the elementary level, students in only one grade are required to be assessed each year. (b) At the secondary level, students in the initial grade designated in the plans are assessed. In addition, students assessed in previous years but who did not achieve minimum standards must be assessed at least once each year until they achieve minimum standards.
2. After students have been assessed, provide students and their parents an opportunity to review the instruments which were used and the complete record of the student's achievement level.
3. By August 31 of each year, report to the Department of Education and make available to the public the number and percentage of students who have achieved and who have not achieved the minimum standards established by the district, as well as the number of students exempted or excluded from the assessment. This report also needs to include a breakdown of the results by sex and race/ethnicity.

III. TEST OPTIONS AND ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

A. Elementary Levels

At the elementary levels, the decision about what assessment instruments to use is a local decision. There is NO STATE REVIEW OR APPROVAL of instruments required. In deciding which tests to use, the following issues are among those that are important to consider:

1. technical quality
2. relationship between test content and district objectives
3. bias issues
4. appropriateness for students
5. item quality
6. grade level selected

The Department of Education's approval criteria for secondary level tests, which is discussed on page 7, can be applied to the review of elementary tests. Implementation Guide #5: Local Test Development Manual may also prove useful in considering test issues.

For the skills of writing and listening (areas in which districts have less experience than in reading and mathematics), the Department of Education has provided some resources for developing and selecting tests. These resources are listed below and schools are encouraged to use them when appropriate:

Guide #2 (Revised Edition), Writing Assessment Manual, March, 1981.

Supplement to Writing Assessment Manual, January, 1982.

Brown, K.L. et al. Assessment of Basic Speaking and Listening Skills (2 Vols.) Massachusetts Department of Education, 1979.

Commercially Available Listening Tests at the Elementary Level, March, 1983 (Appendix A)

B. Secondary Levels

At the secondary level, districts have three options for assessing student achievement of basic skills:

1. State instrument
2. Commercial instrument
3. Locally developed instrument

In their plans districts indicate which of these 3 options they will use for assessing each of the skills. Districts do not have to use the same option for all skill areas. For example, a district may use the state test for reading and listening, a commercial test for mathematics, and a local test for writing.

Districts may also combine options for a skill area. For example, districts may use the state writing test (which consists of two writing samples) and a commercial or local test of objective writing skills. Each of these options is discussed in greater detail below:

Option #1: State Tests

All districts have received the following forms of the state tests:

1. Eight (8) equivalent forms of the reading, writing, and mathematics tests

Form 1 was distributed in 1979
Forms 2-4 were distributed in 1980
Forms 5-6 were distributed in 1981
Forms 7-8 were distributed in 1982

2. Four (4) equivalent forms of the listening tests

Form 1 was distributed in 1981
Form 2, 3, 4 were distributed in 1982

For each form of the state test, the following ancillary materials were also sent:

1. A memorandum on using the tests.
2. Test Administrator's Manual
3. Sample answer sheets
4. Answer keys

NOTE: It is important that schools have all of the ancillary materials before administering any of the state tests. These materials should be carefully reviewed and the procedures outlined in them followed. All test forms and ancillary materials have been sent to all Superintendent of Schools.

For each form of the reading and mathematics tests there are manuals that describe their technical development and test statistics. These manuals are available at the Regional Centers.

Districts are responsible for printing, administering, and scoring the state tests. Districts can conduct these activities themselves or contract for these services from an outside vendor. In September, 1982, the Bureau of Research and Assessment sent all Superintendent of Schools information on available services for printing and scoring the state basic skills tests (memo from Allan S. Hartman dated September 20, 1982 entitled "Updated Information on Potential Service Providers for Printing and Scoring of State Basic Skills Tests.")

Option #2: Commercial Tests

The Department of Education has reviewed and approved a number of secondary level commercial instruments that districts can use. The list of approved commercial tests has been updated several times. The most recent list is included in this Guide (see Appendix B). Note that the Department only needs to approve reading, mathematics, and listening instruments. As discussed later in this section, secondary level writing instruments do not have to be approved by the Department.

The current list of approved commercial instruments met technical and bias criteria established by the State Board of Education in 1979. These instruments do not have to meet any criteria regarding a match to the state secondary level objectives in reading, writing, and mathematics. As a result of action taken by the State Board of Education at its June 22, 1982 meeting, the requirement that any instrument used for assessing secondary level reading, mathematics, or listening skills include all the state's objectives is waived until September 1, 1985. Thus, districts currently using approved secondary level commercial instruments can continue to use them until September 1, 1985.

If a district wishes to use a commercial test that is not on the current approval list, it should contact the Bureau of Research and Assessment, which is responsible for the review of tests. The Bureau will, in turn, contact the publisher for all necessary information concerning the technical qualifications of the test. This material is examined independently by three reviewers who are experienced in test methodology. Agreement of two of the three readers is needed for a test to receive points for each criterion (see Appendix C). Reviewers' judgments are compiled and if a score of 80% of the total possible points has been reached, the test is considered to meet the technical requirements. If a score less than 80% is received, the results of the Review are shared with the publisher who is then asked to provide additional information for criteria where points were not received. After consideration of any additional information, additional points may be awarded.

While the Technical Review Panel is considering the technical information, the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity (BEE0) reviews the test items themselves in terms of the Bias Review Criteria. BEE0 reviews the instruments for overall bias as well as identifying any items which might be offensive to any group. BEE0 then notifies the Bureau of Research and Assessment of its determination of whether or not the test is satisfactorily free of offensive sexual, cultural, racial and ethnic content and stereotyping. If a test passes both the Technical and Bias Review, it is placed on the list of approved tests for use in conjunction with the Basic Skills Improvement Policy.

Option #3: Local Test

The Department of Education has already approved several locally developed secondary level instruments in reading, mathematics and listening. For approval these tests must have a 100% content match to state objectives, although specific local objectives may also be included. Before starting to develop a local test in reading, mathematics, or listening, districts should carefully review Implementation Guide #5: Local Test Development Manual. This Guide provides information on the following test development steps:

1. Identifying basic skills objectives
2. Obtaining items
3. Field Testing of items
4. Constructing test forms

5. Obtaining statistics for test forms
6. Writing a technical manual
7. Obtaining state approval

It also contains an annotated bibliography of several test development publications as well as references to many publications that provide useful information on the various Basic Skills assessment issues and procedures.

After developing a local test, a district should send the Bureau of Research and Assessment 5 copies of the instrument, answer sheet, directions for administration, and accompanying technical information. The Bureau then follows the same procedure for technical and bias review that has been developed for the commercial tests.

C. Assessing Writing

The writing assessment component of the Basic Skills Improvement Program has several distinct features that districts need to keep in mind. These features are described below.

At the elementary level, districts have the option of using a writing sample and/or an objective-referenced writing instrument (such as a multiple-choice test). At the secondary level, districts are required to use a writing sample, although this writing sample may be supplemented with an objective-referenced instrument.

As indicated earlier, secondary level writing instruments do not have to be reviewed or approved by the Department of Education. However, when districts submit their secondary level plans, they are required to provide the following assurances regarding the instrument they would use:

1. All students doing the writing sample would have an opportunity to use a dictionary.
2. Scoring procedures would be used that assess student performance on the secondary level writing objectives set forth in Section 40.04 of the Regulations.
3. Scoring procedures would be used that insure reliability of results.
4. Any commercial or locally-developed writing instrument would have the following characteristics:
 - a. Each item is clear and concise.
 - b. The directions are specific.
 - c. The topic allows for a range of responses.
 - d. The vocabulary is not too difficult to be understood by the average student.
 - e. Each item indicates the way the student should proceed.
 - f. Each item is within the range of experience of all students.
 - g. Each item is free of offensive sexual, cultural, racial, and ethnic content and stereotyping.

There are several ways that writing samples can be scored. The two most common scoring methods are holistic and analytic. There are also a number of alternative techniques for establishing minimum standards on writing samples. Setting standards in writing may be complicated by the use of more than one writing sample at a particular grade level (for example, the state's secondary level writing instrument consists of a letter and an essay) and the administration of both writing samples and objective-referenced instruments.

The Department of Education has sent all the districts the following two publications on writing assessment:

1. Implementation Guide #2 - (Revised Edition) - Writing Assessment Manual, March, 1981

The topics covered in this manual include:

selecting the writing assignment,
holistic scoring procedures, analytic scoring
procedures, standards-setting, and reporting
assessment results.

2. Implementation Guide #2 - Supplement to Writing Assessment Manual, January, 1982

The topics covered in this manual include:

contrasting papers method for standards-
setting, establishing score equivalency and
maintaining standards from year to year,
changing writing topics, and answers to questions
about holistic scoring and standards-setting.

These publications should be reviewed if districts have questions regarding writing assessment options and procedures.

D. Assessing Listening

As indicated previously, elementary level listening instruments selected by districts do not have to be reviewed or approved by the Department of Education. At the secondary level, districts have the choice of using a state, commercial, or local instrument. The Department of Education reviews and approves secondary level commercial or local listening tests. In addition, for all secondary level listening instruments including the state instrument, districts are required to provide the following assurances:

1. A testing environment will be provided which is free of excessive noise, static, echoing, or other distractions that would interfere with students' ability to hear orally presented materials.
2. Oral test materials will be presented with clarity and at a volume, pitch and speed that will not interfere with students' ability to hear orally presented material.

3. A tape recorder that is functioning properly will be provided (if such equipment is used).
4. Instruction for presentation provided by the test publisher will be followed carefully (if material is to be read aloud).
5. Districts will ascertain that students can hear orally presented materials without difficulty before beginning the actual testing.

Because of the nature of a listening assessment(e.g. students answer questions based on oral stimuli), districts should consider the following suggestions when administering listening tests:

- Test students in a relatively small room. A large room may create the problem of students not being able to hear adequately; turning up a tape recorder to service a large room may distort the quality of the taped materials.
- If test materials are read aloud (rather than produced on tape), try to have one or two people read the materials to groups being tested, rather than having each testing session conducted by a different person. This will create a more standard testing situation and experience for all students.
- If test materials are read aloud (rather than produced on tape), districts may wish to give students a second opportunity to meet minimum standards by administering the test with a different test administrator. It is possible that students doing poorly on the test will improve their performance if another test administrator reads the materials.

IV. ASSESSING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

There is no automatic inclusion or exclusion of students with special needs. For each student receiving services under Chapter 766, the evaluation team responsible for that student's Individual Educational Plan makes two decisions for the student:

1. Shall this student be evaluated for achievement of minimum standards?

Depending upon the specific nature of the student's needs, it may be appropriate to evaluate a student in some basic skills areas but not in other areas. Or, it may be appropriate to evaluate the student in all skill areas or in no skill area.

2. Shall the results of any evaluation be included in the Annual Report of results?

The evaluation team may wish to evaluate a student in a certain area to see how the student is doing in achieving minimum standards. But, for a variety of reasons, it may not be appropriate to report these results along with the results of students in regular educational classes.

For example, a special needs student may take the same test as regular education students, but the testing conditions may be changed in response to that student's particular needs. Therefore, it might be inappropriate to combine the special needs student's score with the scores of students who took the test under standardized conditions.

Since the determination of the evaluation TEAM is to be included in the student's Individual Education Plan, existing Chapter 766 Regulations regarding modification to Individual Educational Plans and parental approval are to be followed.

The evaluation TEAM refers to either the TEAM under paragraph 311.0 of the Chapter 766 Regulations which meets to develop the initial Individualized Educational Plan or the participants at annual reviews under paragraph 333.1 who meet to write subsequent educational plans.

The evaluation TEAM in making such a determination shall consider such issues as:

1. What skill areas are to be tested through the Basic Skills Improvement Program?
2. What is the student's skill level in each of the areas to be tested?

3. Under what circumstances could the student demonstrate mastery in these areas?
4. What modification could be made so that the student can benefit from inclusion in the basic skills assessment program?

The evaluation TEAM is required to make a determination relative to a student's participation in the Basic Skills Improvement Program each year that a student is involved in special education. In instances where it is impossible to make such a determination at the time the educational plan is written, paragraph 337.2 of the Chapter 766 Regulations permits subsequent modification.

To make it possible for as many special needs students as possible to participate, consideration should be given to modification in the test administration procedures. Such modification should be the same as or similar to those that are included in other sections of the student's Individualized Educational Plan, under such areas as: student profile, teaching approach and methodology, materials, etc. The purpose of the modifications is to ensure, insofar as possible, that each special needs student receives maximum individual consideration without changing the nature or integrity of the test. It is recommended that the full list of accommodations be examined in relation to each individual student. While many of the modifications are not applicable to a condition in general, some individual students may require them. The following modifications should be considered by the evaluation TEAM and incorporated into the student's educational plan where applicable.

1. Scheduling Modifications: Tests can be administered
 - a. at time of day most beneficial to student.
 - b. in short periods followed by rest breaks.
 - c. until, in administrator's judgment, student can no longer sustain the activity due to physical disability or limited attention span.
2. Setting Modifications: Tests can be administered
 - a. in a small group.
 - b. in a carrel.
 - c. in the special education classroom.
 - d. at child's home.
 - e. with child seated in front of classroom.
 - f. with teacher facing child.
 - g. by student's special education teacher.
 - h. using an interpreter during the time oral instruction is given to the student(s).

3. Format and/or Equipment Modifications: Tests can be administered
 - a. in large print.
 - b. in Braille.
 - c. with child using magnifying equipment, pointer, a non-calibrated ruler.
 - d. with child wearing noise buffers.
 - e. using templates and/or graph paper.
4. Recording Modifications:
 - a. Child can mark answers in test booklets.
 - b. Child's answers can be recorded by proctor or assistant.
 - c. Child can type answers by machine.
5. Modality Modifications:
 - a. Some tests can be read by proctor or via audio cassette.

The Division of Special Education strongly encourages the evaluation TEAMS to permit special education students to participate in the Basic Skills Improvement Program. There is also a requirement that "the evaluation team's determination (relative to the Basic Skills Improvement Program) shall be included in the student's Individual Educational Plan." The appropriate place to include this information is under the additional information section of the educational plan.

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V. REPORTING AND ANALYZING BASIC SKILLS RESULTS

A. Annual Report on Basic Skills Improvement Programs

Districts are required to submit to the Department of Education an Annual Report on its Basic Skills Improvement Program by August 31st of each year. The Department of Education sends school districts the necessary forms as well as detailed instructions for their completion. Currently, districts are required to submit the following information for each skill and grade level which is reported:

1. grade designation
2. evaluation instruments used
3. description of minimum standards
4. number of students achieving and not achieving minimum standards (includes totals as well as breakdowns by sex and race/ethnicity)
5. number of students exempted and not evaluated (includes totals as well as breakdown by sex and race/ethnicity.)

Since districts are required to report results by students' sex and race/ethnicity, as well as account for every student in the grade being reported, schools should have procedures in place for maintaining accurate records of students' basic skills achievement status. Schools should also have procedures in place for coding answer sheets or other records of student achievement, such as writing samples, so they can readily retrieve and summarize students' achievement by the required reporting categories.

Instructions which accompany the Annual Report include specific definitions of the race/ethnicity and exempted/not evaluated reporting categories. The instructions also include information regarding:

1. reporting descriptions of evaluation instruments and minimum standards
2. issues associated with the public reporting of race/ethnicity results
3. retesting of students

At the elementary levels, districts are required to report on the achievement of minimum standards at the early (K-3) and later (4-6) elementary levels by selecting one grade within each of these levels.

At the secondary level, districts are required to report results for students the first time they are assessed for achievement of basic skills. This assessment must take place in either grades 7, 8, and 9. The reporting of students when they are first assessed in grades 7, 8, or 9 has been labeled "initial reporting." When the first group of students reaches either

grades 11 or 12, districts must also report the basic skills achievement results of these students. This reporting has been labeled "final reporting." Districts can decide whether this final reporting at the secondary level takes place at either grades 11 or 12. Once districts begin reporting students in grades 11 or 12 for a particular skill, they are required to submit both an initial and final secondary level reporting form each year for that skill. The first year a district could submit both an initial and final secondary level reporting form is 1982-83. This dual reporting would apply if districts reported 9th graders in 1980-81 in either reading, writing, and/or mathematics and selected 11th grade as their final reporting grade.

The following should be noted regarding the annual reporting requirements:

1. At the secondary level, districts must report only initial and final achievement figures. However, since districts will need to maintain their own follow-up records on each group of secondary students until they reach 11th or 12th grade, the Annual Report forms sent to districts include a follow-up form. Districts can use this form for their own record keeping but should not submit it to the Department of Education.
2. The final reporting forms for the secondary level are identical to those used for initial secondary reporting. As is the case with other reporting forms, districts will have to account for all students in the grade reported, including those evaluated and those exempted/not evaluated. This means schools will have to maintain careful records so that the status of each student at the final reporting grade can be accurately reported.
3. Some school systems assessed different basic skills at different secondary levels (e.g., reading at 7th and mathematics and writing at 8th). These districts will, therefore, phase into final reporting on a staggered basis.
4. Each year beginning in 1982-83, all districts will receive a complete package of forms (including initial and final secondary reporting forms). Only as a district's students reach the final secondary reporting grades will a district have to use the final reporting forms. When a district reaches the final reporting grade for reading, writing, mathematics, and listening, it will be submitting the following forms on a yearly basis:
 - . Early Elementary Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Listening (4 forms)
 - . Later Elementary Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Listening (4 forms)
 - . Secondary Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Listening (4 forms)
 - . Secondary Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Listening - Final (4 forms)
5. Districts will not be required to report Speaking results until at least the end of the 1984-85 school year. The format for reporting Speaking results is expected to be identical to the other skills.

B. Reporting to Parents, Students, the Community, and the Press

The Regulations require school districts to release and make generally available to the public their Annual Report. Schools are also required to take reasonable steps to insure that the residents of their district are informed of the content and availability of the Annual Report. School districts must decide the specific manner in which they will administer this public reporting requirement. The ways the Annual Report is made available could include: sending copies to all parents or residents; asking local newspapers to publicize the Report; and placing copies in schools, libraries, and other public buildings.

Since the media in most communities will ask for information on basic skills results, districts may want to issue a press release when they make their results publicly available. Districts which decide to issue a news release may want to consider the following questions when preparing the release:

1. What tests were administered? Why were they administered?
2. What were the main results?
3. How do the test results compare with the results of previous years? What are the trends in our basic skills results?
4. If the trend is higher or lower, what are the reasons?
5. How are the test results being used?
6. How do key individuals in the district feel about the results?

More information on reporting to the press, including guidelines for presenting information, sending out the news, and sample press releases, can be found in the following Department of Education publication:

Supplement to Implementation Guide #1: Interpreting and Using Commercial Achievement Test Results, May, 1982.

In addition to the public reporting stipulated in the Regulations, school districts are encouraged to report to parents information on the basic skills performance of their children. Schools may want to develop a procedure to send information on basic skills achievement to parents after every administration of an instrument used in conjunction with the Basic Skills Improvement Program.

School systems should also remember that the Regulations require that students and parents shall have the opportunity, after a basic skills evaluation instrument has been administered, to review the instrument and the complete record of a student's achievement level. In order to fulfill these requirements, school systems should keep individual answer sheets, writing samples, etc., in a student's Temporary Record. Access to information in a student's Temporary Record is governed by the Student Records Regulations.

Districts should arrange with test publishers to have all individual student answer sheets returned after scoring. They should also plan how they will make copies of the instrument available to parents and students who would like to review them. Schools should keep file copies of the instruments and answer keys in a principal's and/or guidance counselor's office where parents or students could review these instruments with the assistance of administrators or teachers. Schools do not have to give parents and students copies of the instruments to keep themselves, particularly if an instrument is copyrighted and will be administered in subsequent years.

C. Analyzing Basic Skills Results

In addition to the yearly reporting which is required, districts may find it useful to periodically analyze their basic skills results. This analysis should be related to any overall examination of the assessment component of Basic Skills Programs (see Section VI - Assessment Decisions). Some of the types of questions districts may wish to analyze include:

1. Overall Results
 - a. In which skills/grade levels are the greatest percentage of students achieving minimum standards?
 - b. In which skills/grade levels are the lowest percentage of students achieving minimum standards?
 - c. In which schools within the system is achievement the highest? lowest?
 - d. How have the percentage of students achieving and not achieving minimum standards changed over time?
2. Results by Sex
 - a. Are there significant differences between female/male results in any grade level?
 - b. Are there significant differences in any skill area?
3. Results by Race/Ethnicity
 - a. Are there any significant differences among race/ethnicity groups in any grade level?
 - b. Are there any significant differences in any skill area?
4. Results on Students Exempted/Not Evaluated
 - a. Do the number of students exempted/not evaluated seem reasonable?
 - b. Are there a disproportionate number of students in any sex or race/ethnicity category who have been exempted or not evaluated?

5. Other Possible Analysis Questions

- a. Does student attendance affect basic skills performance?
- b. Is there any relationship between student performance and curricular offerings, or emphasis?
- c. Is there any relationship between student performance and such school characteristics as class size?
- d. Within a skill area, does student performance differ within particular objectives?
- e. How do basic skills results compare with other standardized achievement instruments administered in the district?
- f. How do our results compare with districts using similar tests and standards?

The Annual Statewide Summary of Student Achievement of Minimum Standards in the Basic Skills which is published by the Department of Education provides ways data could be tabulated. The statewide results may be useful in comparing local performance to statewide aggregated results. The following Department of Education publication also provides suggestions for analyzing basic skills test results, particularly in using test data to monitor performance at the district level and to identify instructional needs:

Supplement to Implementation Guide # 1: Interpreting and Using Achievement Test Results, May, 1982

VI. ASSESSMENT DECISIONS

School districts should not consider their Basic Skills Improvement Plans as static documents. The Regulations for Implementation of the Policy on Basic Skills Improvement required school districts to include in their Basic Skills Plans provisions for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying their plans as appropriate. At the elementary level, local plans should include provisions for such activities as:

1. Reviewing elementary programs and curriculum.
2. Making necessary program and curriculum changes.
3. Conducting appropriate staff development efforts, planned in cooperation with affected staff.
4. Implementing appropriate plans for monitoring and evaluating the outcome of these efforts.

At the secondary level, districts' plans include assurances that:

1. Present school programs and curricula will be reviewed for all grades in light of the school district's minimum standards, and appropriate modifications will be made as necessary.
2. Curriculum and instructional services will be reviewed following analysis and reporting of student achievement data.
3. Staff development effects will be planned in consultation with staff affected and will relate to implementation of Basic Skills Improvement Programs.

As a result of these activities, and others suggested below, districts may decide to change one or more elements of their original Basic Skills Improvement Plans. Districts can amend any part of their Plans. The Department of Education does not have to be notified of changes in elementary plans. However, the Department does have to review and approve amendments to secondary plans. Schools should contact the Basic Skills Coordinator at their Regional Education Center for information on the forms and procedures for amending secondary level plans.

In addition to the specific plan review activities noted above, which are required by the Regulations, there are a number of assessment related components of Basic Skills Improvement Plans that districts should periodically review. Within each of these components, there are several questions districts should address when determining whether to modify any of their assessment strategies in light of experiences in implementing their plans. These questions are listed below, along with some suggestions of ways districts could address these issues.

It is important to note that districts should not necessarily examine each of these questions at once. Based on their experiences districts should decide how frequently (e.g., once a year, every two or three years) they want to address these questions and which ones they want to examine within a given time frame. The Department suggests that districts review each question at least once every three years.

Each of the assessment-related questions discussed below apply to all grade levels and skill areas.

A. Are our basic skills objectives appropriate?

- Review the objectives in light of the current textbooks and classroom materials which teachers and curriculum specialists are using.
- Review present grade level curriculum for each skill area.
- Review student test performance on each objective to see if there are any that are consistently too easy or too difficult for students. Consider deleting any that are at either extreme.
- Consider adding curriculum areas that staff consider very important but are not included in your basic skills objectives.

B. Are students being tested at the appropriate grade levels?

- Review the curriculum for the grade levels in which students are tested. If many of the objectives being assessed are not covered until a later grade, students may be tested too early. Consider changing the grade level (or changing the test). If many of the objectives are taught in earlier grades, consider assessing students earlier.
- Review trends in student performance at each grade level tested. If student performance is significantly below or above what is expected, determine if the grade level should be changed (or change the test and/or the objectives).

NOTE: Schools should attempt to coordinate the grade levels in which students are tested with their instructional programs. Students should be scheduled for testing after they have been taught the objectives. In addition, schools should want to allow time to retest students who do not achieve minimum standards before they are assessed for minimum standards at the next grade level.

- Districts feeding students into a regional school should coordinate the grade level at which they assess students with that of the receiving school.

C. Do the assessment instruments effectively measure the objectives stated in Plans?

- Review the number of items in a test which measure each objective. If there are only one or two items which test many of the objectives, consider changing the test, particularly if you would like the test to be used for diagnosing student weaknesses as well as for mastery decisions.
- Review the items to see if they are appropriate for the objectives to which they are matched. For example, analyze the content and difficulty level of the items.

D. Are the assessment instruments technically credible?

- Review the technical manuals which accompany the test. In particular, examine the validity and reliability data which are presented. Compare these data to the validity and reliability standards used by the Department of Education in reviewing secondary level commercial tests .
- Review the information presented in the technical manuals on the item review and field test procedures used in developing the test. Examine whether the students in the field test represented a national cross-section of important strata within our society. In addition, see if the field test sample included students comparable to those in your community.

E. How practical are the instruments which are being used?

- Review the administrative directions accompanying the test as well as the experiences of local staff responsible for administering them.
- Determine whether written instructions and materials are clear and suitable for the intended student population.
- Determine whether procedures for students' recording of answers (e.g., answer sheets) are easy and convenient to use.
- See whether the test has practice questions.
- Review scoring procedures, particularly how easy and economical they are.
- Since students take these tests at least once a year, determine if there are enough alternative forms to insure test security.

F. Do the instruments adequately fit your assessment needs?

- Analyze how well a test serves your basic skills improvement needs (e.g., deciding which students have and have not achieved minimum standards). In addition, analyze how well it serves other needs such as guiding instruction, planning and evaluating curriculum, reporting to parents and the community, and making inter-school and inter-district comparisons.
- If the test does not seem to meet the purposes for which it was intended, review other tests and see if there is one that would be better suited for your needs.

NOTE: A single instrument cannot be used for all possible assessment decisions. Select the instrument that was designed for the purpose(s) you have in mind.

NOTE: On the basis of their analysis of the types of issues discussed in sections A-F above, districts should decide whether they want to change the instrument currently being used for a particular grade level and skill. Districts could decide to use a different commercial test, develop their own instrument, or (at the secondary level only) use the state's instrument.

G. Should minimum standards be changed?

- Determine whether standards may be too high by comparing basic skills test results with classroom observation. If many pupils who perform above minimally acceptable classroom levels are being classified as not achieving standards, the standards may have to be lowered (or the test changed).
- Determine whether standards may be too low by analyzing how many students who perform below minimally acceptable classroom levels are achieving local standards. If too many students are being classified as achieving standards whom teachers believe have not achieved acceptable levels of basic skills, then the standards may have to be raised (or the test changed).
- Analyze how many students are being classified just above and below the cut-off point. If too many students appear to be classified close to the specific standard, consider using a score band and decision rules for immediate re-testing. (See Implementation Guide #3 (Revised Edition) - Standards Setting Manual, March, 1981, for information on these procedures.)
- Determine whether local conditions have changed since standards were first established (e.g. resources, curriculum, student background, community expectations) and if standards should be altered as a result of these changes.

NOTE: Standards, no matter how they are established, still include some element of subjectivity. Because of this subjective nature of standards, districts should periodically review how well their standards fit local needs and conditions.

H. Should multiple and/or alternative assessment instruments to be used?

- Determine whether two different instruments should be administered for a particular skill/grade level given local objectives and assessment purposes. On the basis of their writing program, districts may decide to use both an objective-referenced (e.g., multiple-choice) test and a writing sample. There are several ways districts could use multiple instruments in their Basic Skills Improvement Programs:
 - Students could demonstrate achievement of minimum standards on either one of the two instruments which are administered.
 - Students may be required to demonstrate achievement of minimum standards on both instruments.
 - Districts may decide to use a test battery with several sub-tests. For example, the reading score of a test may be composed of sub-tests in vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills. Districts could look at the overall reading score and set a minimum standard on that total score, require students to reach a certain score on two of the three sub-tests, or require achievement of a certain score on all of the three sub-tests.

NOTE: A decision to use multiple instruments should be based, in part, on whether the administration of more than one instrument would increase the precision and accuracy of results and whether necessary resources are available for conducting this type of assessment program. If multiple instruments are used, a minimum standard has to be established on each one. At the secondary level, all instruments used in reading, mathematics, and listening have to be approved by the Department of Education.

I. What other assessment aspects of local plans should be reviewed?

- There are several miscellaneous assessment-related issues districts should also periodically examine. They include:
 - . The information on basic skills assessment procedures and results that is communicated to teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Additional information may be appropriate.
 - . The extent of which basic skills assessment activities fit in with other school programs.
 - . The adequacy of the records maintained on students' basic skills performance.

NOTE: The following Department of Education publication should be reviewed for more information on many of the issues raised in this section, particularly for commercial tests:

Supplement to Implementation Guide #1: Interpreting and Using Commercial Achievement Test Results (May, 1982).

APPENDIX A

Commercially Available Listening Tests at the
Elementary Level

The following list of commercially available listening tests has been compiled as a resource for schools in developing their Elementary Level Basic Skills Plans. In some cases, the tests are part of a battery; some, however, can be purchased separately. Although this list attempts to cover all those tests that are readily available to the public, other tests may be used. In no way is this list meant to imply Department approval. The choice of method for listening assessment at the elementary level is a local decision.

Title: CIRCUS, LEVELS A-D

Date of Construction: 1979

Grade Range: K-3.5

Available From: CTB/McGraw-Hill

Purpose: This test is intended to measure children's ability to understand and interpret events that are presented in a narrative, to remember a sequence of events, and to understand vocabulary in the context of sentences.

Format: The teacher reads a story. After each question, children respond by marking one of four pictures.
Levels A and B: 25 items, 30 minutes.
Levels C and D: 30 items, 40 minutes.

Title: COMPREHENSIVE TEST OF BASIC SKILLS. ORAL COMPREHENSION
SUB-TEST IN READING BATTERY. LEVELS A-E

Date of Construction: 1981

Grade Range: K-3

Available From: CTB/McGraw-Hill

Purpose: The test measures children's understanding of spoken sentences and short passages. In some of the items, the pupil identifies the picture that shows the meaning of nouns, verbs and propositions in a sentence. Other items require pupils to identify the picture that illustrates details or ideas given in a passage.

Format: The teacher reads a passage and pupils respond by identifying a picture from a multiple choice format.
15 items, 15 minutes.

Title: METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS: LISTENING COMPREHENSION
SUBTEST OF THE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTIONAL TEST

Date of Construction: 1978

Grade Range: K.5-4.9

Available From: The Psychological Corporation

Purpose: The objectives included on the Listening Comprehension Test relate directly to the listening comprehension requirements of the pre-high school classroom. These objectives are divided into two categories: Comprehension of Meaning and Comprehension of Syntactic Structure. From Primer through Elementary levels, ten instructional objectives are measured within these two categories.

Format: Stimulus material is read aloud by the administrator, and pupils mark a response by choosing one of the three pictures provided. The time required to administer the test ranges from 20 to 30 minutes.

Title: PROJECT SIGNALS LISTENING TEST

Date of Construction: 1982.

Grade Range: 2 Forms: Grade 3 and Grade 5

Available From: Project Signals
315 West Main Street
Norton, MA. 02766

Purpose: This is a screening test based on minimal competencies in the following areas: 1) understanding of main idea; 2) following geographic directions; 3) following instructions. Five items are given for each objective.

Format: The test instructions and content are presented orally on tape cassette. Pupils make responses in a test booklet which includes maps and drawings. Stability of mastery decisions are given for various cut points in samples of 2nd, 3rd and 5th grade pupils.

Title: PRI READING SYSTEMS: SUBTEST IN THE ORAL LANGUAGE AND COMPREHENSIVE CLUSTER

Date of Construction: 1980

Grade Range: K-4: 2 Levels.

Available From: CTB/McGraw-Hill

Purpose: The test measures sound segment and comparison, vocabulary and syntax. It also measures literal and inferred meaning.

Format: The test is presented on an audio cassette. Pupils choose responses from a set of pictures. No letters or numbers are used in the answer sheet. The test is composed of 42-48 items, taking 36 minutes.

Title: THE RIVERSIDE LISTENING TEST (Restricted to users of the ITBS)

Date of Construction: 1982

Grade Range: Grades 3-6: 4 Levels.

Available From: Riverside Publishing Company

Purpose: The test measures students' ability to recall details, summarize and draw inferences from dictated passages, and to follow directions.

Format: Test passages are read to pupils who choose their responses from 4 answer choices. Choices are indicated by filling in an oval on a separate answer sheet. Each level contains 30 items that normally can be administered in less than an hour.

Title: STEP (SEQUENTIAL TEST OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS) LISTENING TEST
Date of Construction: 1979
Grade Range: Grades 3.5-6.5: 3 Levels.
Available From: CTB/McGraw-Hill
Purpose: The test measures pupils' ability to comprehend, interpret, remember detail and summarize dictated passages. It also measures ability to follow directions. Some of the vocabulary in the reading test is used in the listening test in order to help determine whether children can understand vocabulary in different contexts.
Format: The teacher reads material while pupils respond to a multiple choice format. The test consists of 20 items and can be administered in 20 minutes.

Title: SRA ACHIEVEMENT SERIES, SUBTEST OF READING BATTERY
Date of Construction: 1978
Grade Range: K-3.5: 3 Levels.
Available From: Science Research Associates
Purpose: The test is composed of 2-5 items on each of the following objectives: understanding directions, grasping details, summarizing, perceiving relationships and drawing conclusions.
Format: Pupils respond to a multiple choice format. There are 20 items which take 25 minutes to administer.

Title: STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST, 7TH EDITION, LISTENING

Date of Construction: 1981

Grade Range: K-1.9: 2 Levels.
Grades 1.5-4.9: 3 Levels.
Grades 4.5-7.9: 2 Levels.

Available From: The Psychological Corporation

Purpose: The test measures comprehension (retention of detail, inference, summary, and main idea) in both recreational and learning contexts. At the early levels, it also measures vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary and listening comprehension can be combined for a total score in the regular reading battery. Listening is also available as a separate test.

Format: The teacher reads passages and answer choices while pupils indicate responses in a separate answer folder. There are 50 items to be answered in 30 minutes.

APPROVED COMMERCIAL TESTS
SECONDARY LEVEL READING, MATHEMATICS AND LISTENING TESTS

The Basic Skills Improvement Policy provides local school districts three options for testing secondary level students (See Section 40.05 of Regulations). The test listed below have been approved for use in assessing the basic skills of reading, mathematics and listening. None of the tests reviewed were constructed or intended for specific use in the implementation of the Basic Skills Improvement Policy. Judgements made about these tests should in no way be interpreted to reflect on the suitability of the tests in terms of their originally intended use.

APPROVED TESTS IN READING

	Level	Form	Copyright	Publisher/ Distributor
Basic Skills Assessment		A,B,C	1977	CTB McGraw-Hill
California Achievement Test	17-19	C	1977	"
" " "	17-19	D	1978	"
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills	3,4	S	1973	"
" " "	3,4	T	1975	"
Comprehensive Testing Program II	4	D	1982	Educational Records Bureau
Gates-MacGinitie, 2nd Edition	E,F	1,2,3	1978	Riverside
Iowa Test of Basic Skills	13,14	7,8	1978	Houghton-Mifflin Riverside
Metropolitan Achievement Test	Adv. 1,2	JS,KS	1978	Psychological Corp.
Senior High Assessment of Reading Performance (S.H.A.R.P.)		B	1977	CTB/McGraw-Hill
Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (STEP)	H-J	X,Y	1979	"
SRA Achievement Series	F-H	1,2	1978	Science Research Assoc.
Stanford Achievement	Adv.	A,B	1972	Psychological Corp.
Stanford Achievement, 7th Ed.	Adv.	E	1981	"
Stanford Diagnostic	brown	A,B	1976	"
Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)	1,2	E	1981	"
Test of Achievement and Proficiency	15-18	T	1978	Houghton-Mifflin Riverside
Three R's	13-16		1982	Riverside

	Level	Form	Copyright	Publisher/ Distributor
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APPROVED TESTS OF MATHEMATICS

Basic Skills Assessment		A,B,C	1977	CTB/McGraw Hill
California Achievement Test	17-19	C	1977	"
" " "	17-19	D	1978	"
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills	3, 4	S	1973	"
" "	3, 4	T	1975	"
Comprehensive Testing Program II	4	D	1982	Educational Records Bureau
Iowa Test of Basic Skills	13,14	7,8	1978	Houghton Mifflin/ Riverside
Metropolitan Achievement Test	Adv. 1,2	JS,KS	1978	Psychological Corp.
Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (STEP)	H-J	X,Y	1979	CTB/McGraw Hill
SRA Achievement Series	F,G,H	1,2	1978	Science Research Corp.
Stanford Achievement,	Adv.	A,B	1972	Psychological Corp.
Stanford Achievement 7th Ed.	Adv.	E	1981	"
Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)	1,2	E	1981	"
Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP)	15,18	T	1978	Houghton Mifflin Riverside
Three R's	13,16		1982	Riverside

APPROVED TESTS OF LISTENING

Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (STEP)	H-J	X,Y	1979	CTB/McGraw Hill
Stanford Achievement, 7th Ed.	Adv.	E	1981	Psychological Corp.

TEST REVIEW FORM INFORMATION SHEET

Test _____

Fall, 1979

NRT ☐ CRT ☐

(form and level) (copyright)

(To be completed by Reviewers)

(To be completed by Publisher)

Technical Criteria	Possible Points		Publisher's Response	Verification (give manual and page number)	Reviewer's Response
	NRT	CRT			
14. Is there a Technical Manual which includes information about the test regarding the following ten topics:					
a. Item Review Methods	1	1	yes no		yes no
b. Item Analysis	1	1	yes no		yes no
c. Average Item Difficulty	1	1	yes no		yes no
d. Internal Consistency Reliability	1	NA	yes no		yes no
e. Test/Retest Reliability	1	1	yes no		yes no
f. Parallel Form Reliability	1	1	yes no		yes no
g. Standard Error of Measurement	1	1	yes no		yes no
h. Content Validity	1	1	yes no		yes no
i. Norms	1	NA	yes no		yes no
j. Procedures for screening items for offensive sexual, cultural, racial, and/or ethnic content, and/or stereotyping	1	1	yes no		yes no

NA = Not applicable

REVIEW FORM (to be completed by Publisher)					(to be completed by Reviewers)	
Technical Criteria	Possible Points		Publisher's Response	Verification (Give manual and page number)	Reviewer's Response	
	NRT	CRT				
15. How many (what %) of the items reviewed meet the standard rules of item writing?	5 4 3 0	5 4 3 0	90 - 100% 80 - 89% 70 - 79% less than 70%		90 - 100% 80 - 89% 70 - 79% less than 70%	
16. Were item analysis results used to identify "defective" test items?	3	3	yes no		yes no	
17a. Are data bearing on the consistency of mastery decisions (for one or more performance standards or cut-off scores) reported in the Technical Manual?	1	1	yes no		yes no	
b. Is a rational given for the selection of a method for determining cut-off scores?	NA	2	yes no		yes no	
c. Is the procedure for implementing the method explained, and is it appropriate?*	NA	2	yes no		yes no	
d. Is evidence for the validity of the chosen cut-off score(s) offered, and is it appropriate?*	NA	2	yes no		yes no	
18. Is the consistency of mastery decisions (for one or more cut-off scores) reported in the Technical Manual equal to or above .90?*	NA	5	yes no		yes no	
19. Do standard indices of internal consistency reliability reported on the total reading score or total mathematics score reach or exceed .90?	5 3 1 0	NA	.90 - 1.00 .80 - .89 .70 - .79 less than .70		.90 - 1.00 .80 - .89 .70 - .79 less than .70	
20. Do standard indices of test/retest or parallel form reliability as reported on the total reading score or total mathematics score reach or exceed .90?	5 3 1 0	5 3 1 0	.90 - 1.00 .80 - .89 .70 - .79 less than .70		.90 - 1.00 .80 - .89 .70 - .79 less than .70	

* Currently not included in tabulation of total points of which percentage is calculated.

REVIEW FORM (to be completed by Publisher)					(to be completed by Reviewers)	
Technical Criteria	Possible Points		Publisher's Response	Verification (give manual and page number)	Reviewer's Response	
	NRT	CRT				
22. Are the test score norms based on data that is no more than five years old?	2	NA	yes no		yes no	
23. Were the norm groups of sufficient size (i.e., at least 300 students)?	2	NA	yes no		yes no	
24a. Were the samples of students used in the norming study representative of students in the grades for which this test is intended?	3	NA	yes no		yes no	
b. Were the samples of students used in the field test representative of students in the grades for which this test is intended?	NA	3	yes no		yes no	
25a. Were the samples of students used in the norming study representative of important strata within the society (i.e., rural pupils, minority group pupils, pupils in large city schools, etc.)	3	NA	yes no		yes no	
b. Were the samples of students used in the field test representative of important strata within the society (i.e., rural pupils, minority group pupils, pupils in large city schools, etc.)	NA	3	yes no		yes no	
26. Are the test administration directions suitable for students in the lowest grade covered by the test?	2	2	yes no		yes no	
27. Do the test administration directions address the matter of time limits?	2	2	yes no		yes no	
28. Do the test administration directions indicate to the student how to handle the problem of guessing?	2	2	yes no		yes no	

REVIEW FORM (to be completed by Publishers)				(to be completed by Reviewers)	
Technical Criteria	Possible Points		Publisher's Response	Verification (give manual and page number)	Reviewer's Response
	NRT	CRT			
29. Is the layout or format of the test booklet convenient for students in the lowest grade covered by the test?	2	2	yes no		yes no
30. Is the layout or format of the answer sheet convenient for students in the lowest grade covered by the test?	2	2	yes no		yes no
31. Does the test include practice questions?	2	2	yes no		yes no

BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT POLICY
Department Resources: Assessment

General

Basic Skills Improvement Policy and Regulations	January 1979
1980/81 Statewide Summary of Student Achievement of Minimum Standards in the Basic Skills of Reading, Writing and Mathematics	December 1981
1981/82 Statewide Summary of Student Achievement of Minimum Standards in the Basic Skills of Reading, Writing and Mathematics	February 1983

Implementation Guides

Guide #1 (Revised Edition). Assessing Basic Skills Achievement	May 1980
Supplement: Interpreting and Using Commercial Achievement Test Results	May 1982
Guide #2 (Revised Edition). Writing Assessment Manual	March 1981
Supplement to Writing Assessment Manual	January 1982
Guide #3 (Revised Edition). Standard Setting Manual	March 1981
Guide #4. Forms and Procedures	December 1979

Assessment Instruments and Information

Reading, Writing and Mathematics

Massachusetts Tests of Basic Skills, Forms 1-8	1979-1982
Test Development Technical Reports, Forms 1-8	1979-1982

Listening

Massachusetts Tests of Basic Skills, Forms 1-4	1982
Massachusetts Test of Basic Skills: Listening and Speaking: Summary Report, Technical Report, Development Report	1979-1980
List of Commercially Available Listening Tests at the Elementary Level	March 1983

Speaking

Speaking Assessment	August 1981
Development of State Speaking Assessment Instrument: Reliability and Bias Study	September 1982
Technical Report: Reliability and Bias Study	September 1982

